

The Return of the Wandering Jew(s) in Samuel Hirszenberg's Art

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Few Jewish artists of the turn of the twentieth century created works that became classics in their lifetime. One who did was Samuel Hirszenberg, the Łódź-born (1865) artist, who was trained in Cracow, Munich, and Paris, and eventually came in October 1907 to teach at the fledgling Bezalel Art School in Jerusalem, where he died less than a year later.¹ Hirszenberg's huge and haunting *Wandering Jew* of 1899 (343 × 293 cm), that we revisit here, presently in the collection of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem,² is certainly one of the most dramatic paintings by a Jewish artist in the nineteenth century, and thus for good reason has been reproduced and discussed repeatedly in various publications. Indeed, the *Wandering Jew* became one of the classic Zionist icons in early Bezalel days.³ It was hung in a central location of the museum for almost a generation and was often seen as a background for photographs taken of Boris Schatz with distinguished visitors (e.g., Chaim Weizmann and Ahad Ha-am) to the Bezalel Museum. But the painting has rarely been shown in the three decades since the comprehensive Bezalel retrospective in 1983.⁴

Depicting a lonely, frightened figure, a condemned Jew, running towards the spectator through a dense forest

of tall crosses and scattered corpses, the painting's site cannot but remind a contemporary viewer of Holocaust-related images (fig. 1). Hirszenberg's own journeys, though fraught with much anxiety and uncertainty, pale in the light of the endless road conveyed by his *Wandering Jew*. Yet the artist's personal quest for a comfortable setting and situation, aggravated by his poor health and the financial insecurity of his family, contributed to his bleak outlook on the fate of the Jews. Apparently Hirszenberg worked on the ambitious painting for four years, but the minimal biographical information extant leaves the immediate motivations for the painting shrouded in uncertainty. Moreover, as this article will argue, the haunting figure of the Wandering Jew (the mythic and the real) continued to remain alive in Hirszenberg's imagination during the following years, even after the painting was completed.

In 1908 Hirszenberg created a small oil painting (27.5 × 17.5 cm) – possibly a preparatory work for a larger one – presently held in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (fig. 2). Mentioned only briefly in previous discussions of the artist's work, it was authored in Jerusalem during the

For Prof. Galit Hasan-Rokem, a devoted and inspiring scholar of the "Wandering Jew."

The authors wish to thank Prof. Ezra Mendelsohn for his close reading of a previous version of this article and for his constructive comments and suggestions from which they benefited greatly. We wish to thank Ms Hodaya Kantarowitz-Wachtel and Ms Monika Czekanowska for their helpful assistance.

1 For a detailed description of Hirszenberg's life and work, see Richard I. Cohen, "Samuel Hirszenberg's Imagination: An Artist's Interpretation of the Jewish Dilemma at the Fin de Siècle," in *Text and Context: Essays in Modern Jewish History and Historiography in Honor of Ismar Schorsch*, eds. Eli Lederhendler and Jack Wertheimer (New York, 2005), 219–55.

2 IM BO4.1484. Our thanks to Ms Noga Eliash-Zalmanovitz of the Israel Museum's Department of Modern Art for her assistance.

3 Several years after the painting was exhibited, it was sold and distributed as a poster and postcard and aggressively advertised in Jewish newspapers for months on end. After it was brought by the artist to Jerusalem, it was prominently displayed in the Bezalel Museum, discussed in various Jewish periodicals of the day (e.g., *Keshet* and *Ost und West*), and had an impact on later Jewish artists. See also Cohen, "Samuel Hirszenberg's Imagination," 236–37.

4 Nurit Shilo-Cohen (ed.), "*Bezalel*" shel Schatz 1906–1929 (Schatz's "Bezalel," 1906–1929) [catalogue, Israel Museum] (Jerusalem, 1983), 24, 28, 29, and 191 (Hebrew).



Fig. 1. Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Wandering Jew*, 1899, oil on canvas, 343 × 293 cm, B04.1484, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo © The Israel Museum by David Harris



Fig. 2. Samuel Hirszenberg, *Jerusalem (On the Way to the Western Wall)*, 1908, oil on canvas, 27.5 × 17.5 cm, Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Photo courtesy of Tel Aviv Museum of Art

year in which Hirszenberg died after progressively failing health. This colorful painting, showing a procession of Orthodox Jews walking between large boulders of different shapes and sizes, away from the spectator and towards the Western Wall, is listed in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art under the title *Jerusalem*. A sketch for the painting was first published in *Ost und West* in 1912 bearing the title *An der Klagemauer* (At the Wailing Wall), however, when reproduced in 1962 it was given the title *On the Way to the Western Wall* and later so named in two publications by Gideon Ofrat.⁵ Hirszenberg himself had signed the painting *S. Hirszenberg/Jerusalem 08* which apparently led to the name *Jerusalem*, which we do not consider its intended title; thus we will allude to the painting as *On the Way to the Western Wall*, acknowledging that this was not necessarily Hirszenberg's original title but nonetheless closer to the painting's intent.

None of the extant images of the Western Wall at the turn of the century provide a similar perspective of the area near the Wall, confirming that the artist's portrayal of the alley leading to the Wall was far from an attempt at a realistic portrayal.⁶ Rather than see the work as merely another depiction of Jerusalem's foremost Jewish religious site, we would like to explore an unexpected dialogue created between the two paintings – *The Wandering Jew* and *On the Way to the Western Wall*. In spite of their

obvious difference in size, if juxtaposed, the two works seem to complement each other, both in iconography and composition, and may help shed light on the persistent theme of wandering in Hirszenberg's oeuvre as well as his preoccupation with the mythic dimension of Jewish existence. To pursue this "dialogue" it is necessary to explore once again Hirszenberg's *Wandering Jew*, as well as some subsequent works that may have eventually led the artist to create *On the Way to the Western Wall*.

The *Wandering Jew* is generally interpreted as the Polish-Jewish artist's response to the harsh plight and destiny of the Jews in the Diaspora, epitomized by constant and aggressive Christian anti-Semitism, transforming the original implications of the myth of the Wandering Jew in Christian tradition.⁷ In searching for the iconographic sources for Hirszenberg's inspiration for the *Wandering Jew*, scholars have referred to the image of the Wandering Jew in Wilhelm von Kaulbach's monumental *The Destruction of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus*, 1841–46 and Gustave Doré's illustrations for *La légende du Juif errant*, 1852, yet other comparisons may provide further insight into Hirszenberg's conception of the painting.⁸ Situating Hirszenberg's *Wandering Jew* at the height of the *fin de siècle*, a period distinguished by expressions of anxiety and decadence, a sense of despair, impending doom, and even an apocalyptic vision of the demise of society,

5 Inv. no. Tel Aviv Museum of Art 2644. Our thanks to the curators Ahuva Israel, Irit Hadar, and Ruth Feldman for their assistance. The tiny holes left in the corners of the small painting seem to be remnants of thumb tacks, suggesting that the work was not meant to be framed as a finished one but was pinned to a wall, possibly in preparation for a final, and larger, version. For the sketch, see *Ost und West* 2 (1912): 147–48. The painting was reproduced in *Gazit* 19, no. 9–12 (1962); Gideon Ofrat, "Ha-ommanut ha-utopit shel Bezalel" (The Utopian Art of 'Bezalel'), in *Sippurah shel ommanut Yisrael: mi-mei "Bezalel" be-1906 ve-ad yamenu* (The Story of Israeli Art: From the Days of "Bezalel" in 1906 to the Present), eds. Benjamin Tammuz, Dorit Levita, and Gideon Ofrat (Giv'atayyim, 1980¹; 1987²), 24 (Hebrew); idem, *Al ha-arez: ha-ommanut ha-arez-yisre'elit. Pirkei-Avot* (On the Ground: Early Eretz-Israeli Art), vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1993), 221 (Hebrew).

6 See the diverse images of the Western Wall at the turn of the century in *Ha-kotel Ha-ma'aravi* (The Western Wall), *Ariel* 180–81 (July 2007) (Hebrew); see also Alex Carmel, *The Life and Work of Gustav Bauernfeind, Orientalist Painter, 1848–1904* (Stuttgart, 1990) (German and English).

7 See, inter alia, Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes (eds.), *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend* (Bloomington, 1986); Laurence Sigal-Klagsbald and Richard I. Cohen (eds.), *Le Juif errant: Un témoin du temps* [catalogue, Musée d'art et d'histoire du judaïsme] (Paris, 2001); Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "Menasseh Ben Israel and the 'Wandering Jew,'" *AJ* 2 (2006): 59–82.

8 The Kaulbach painting (585 × 705 cm!) is housed in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich where it maintains a place of honor and covers an entire wall (WAF 403). See Avraham Ronen, "Kaulbach's Wandering Jew: An Anti-Jewish Allegory and Two Jewish Responses," *Assaph* 3 (1998): 251–53; Cohen, "Samuel Hirszenberg's Imagination," 235–40. Doré's series of lithographs was first published in 1852; however a very caustic, anti-Semitic image of the mythic figure appeared on the cover of *Le Journal pour rire* in 1852. For a discussion of the Doré images, see *Le Juif errant*, 202–3. We have no way of determining whether Hirszenberg ever saw the Doré caricature of 1852 in which the Wandering Jew's forehead bears a cross, the mark of Cain, yet it seems more than likely that he visited the Neue Pinakothek on one of his stays in Munich and inevitably encountered Kaulbach's painting.

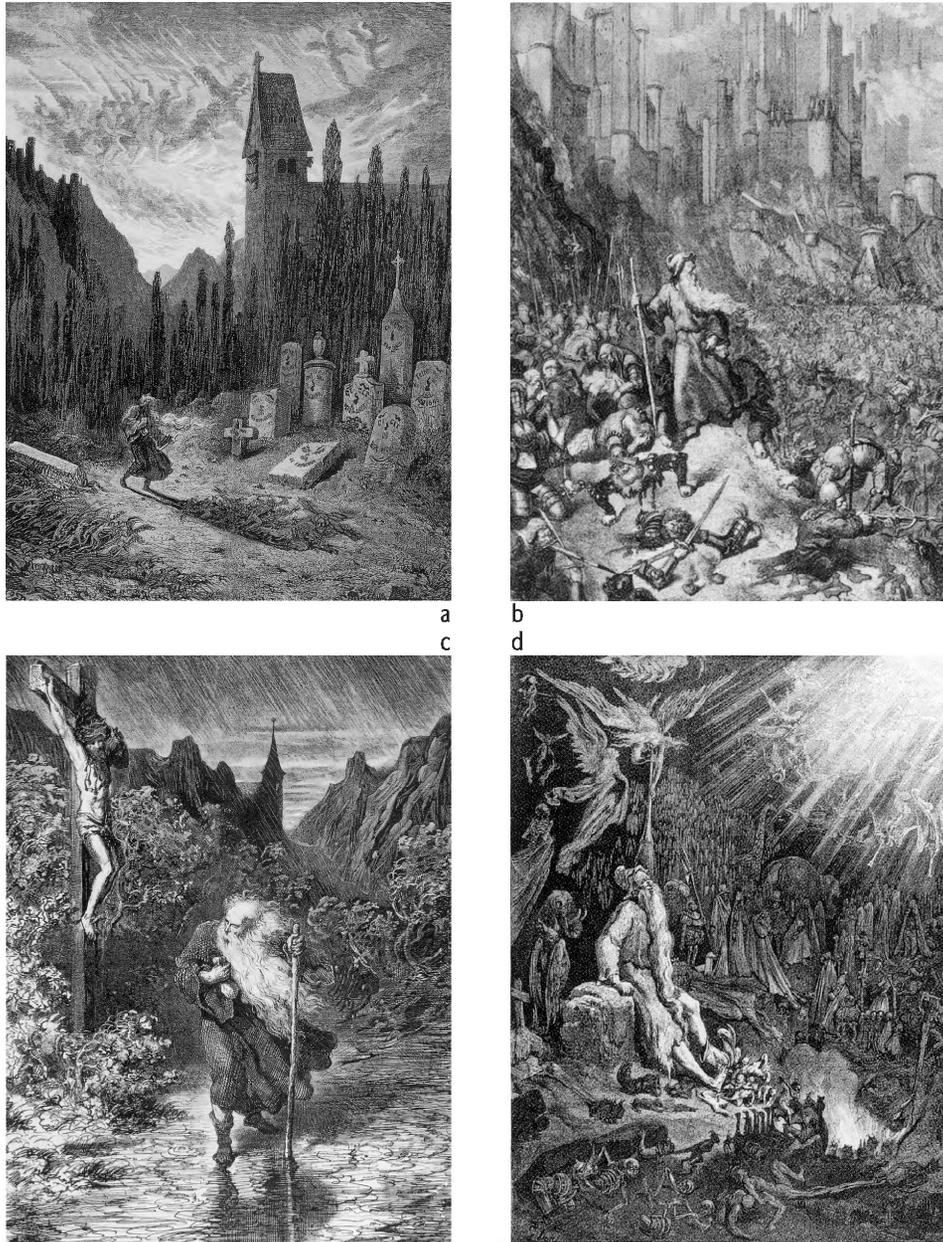


Fig. 3 a–d. Illustrations from Gustave Doré. *La légende du Juif errant* (Paris, 1852)

bestows upon Hirszenberg's creation a definite place within the universal European cultural scene.⁹

Doré's images (figs. 3 a–d) suggest several elements similar to those that appear in Hirszenberg's painting: the

density of cypresses in the graveyard (fig. 3a) resemble the density of the crosses, while the wounded and dead warriors strewn on the ground (fig. 3b) mirror the dead or wounded bodies scattered on the ground of Hirszenberg's

9 On the cultural implications of the *fin de siècle*, see Sally Ledger and Roger Lockhurst (eds.), *The Fin de siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880–1900* (Oxford, 2000); John Stokes (ed.), *Fin de siècle, fin du globe: Fears and Fantasies of the Late Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1992); for its Jewish component and parallels with Hirszenberg's perspective, see Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de siècle: Cosmopolitanism*

and *Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley, 2001). The doom and despair present in artistic creations of that period is well illustrated by Edward Munch's famous *Scream* of 1893; the sense of degeneration is boldly presented by Max Nordau in his classic work of 1895, *Degeneration* (New York, 1968).

work. Both Doré and Hirszenberg used clothes and props as signs of identity but in a contrasting manner – while Doré has his Wandering Jew appearing with some of the traditional attributes of Ahasver – especially his long and unwieldy beard, the long coat, a small purse, and a large walking stick (figs. 3b–c), Hirszenberg’s Wandering Jew is bearded and naked, but for a loincloth tied in a way typically appearing on and associated with the crucified Jesus, as in Doré’s illustration (fig. 3c). Moreover, what seems to be a folded *tallit* appears in the lower right-hand corner of Hirszenberg’s painting covering the victim’s genitals, thus alluding to his Jewish identity. Across from him a female figure in the foreground, in the bottom left-hand corner of the painting, has her arms outstretched in a Christ-like position. The other naked bodies strewn on the ground of Hirszenberg’s painting appear to have no visible signs of having been killed or wounded, in spite of the blood spilled on the ground. These bodies seem to be in a state of deep sleep. Indeed, the nakedness of the bodies, and their diverse character, unlike those in Doré’s painting, accord Hirszenberg’s work a mythic, timeless character, à la *fin de siècle*, accentuating even more the horror of the lonesome figure running through this valley of death.¹⁰

Moreover, Hirszenberg’s presentation of the Wandering Jew’s naked body wrapped in a loincloth may also be seen as an aged, horrified Christ-like image who now has to face the destruction perpetrated in his name. Hirszenberg was not the first artist of Jewish origin to suggest the parallel between the suffering of the Wandering Jew and that of Christ. Maurycy Gottlieb’s self-portrait *Ahasuerus* of 1876,

although seldom seen in this vein, actually creates this association with its cross-like background and the angle of the artist’s head leaning towards the left – like Christ’s head on the cross in countless portrayals.¹¹ Similarly, Leonid Pasternak’s *He Can Wait* of 1892, an image of an elderly Orthodox Jew sitting downtrodden with his cane next to him, inspired by the 1891 expulsion of Jews from Moscow, is based on Ivan Kramskoi’s image of *Christ in the Desert*.¹² By comparing Jewish suffering to Christ’s, Jewish artists used a universal language that reached a broader audience, a fact that may possibly have contributed to the jury’s decision to overlook Hirszenberg’s confrontational depiction of Christianity and still award the painting a bronze medal at the 1900 Paris International Exhibition where it was exhibited.¹³ Moreover, as with Gottlieb’s self-portrait as *Ahasuerus*, Hirszenberg also stressed a strong, personal identification with the tortured image of the Wandering Jew: a definite resemblance exists between the facial features of the artist (as seen from a sculpture of him created by his brother-in-law Henryk Glicenstein [1870–1943] from 1900), and that of the *Wandering Jew*, suggesting the likely possibility that Hirszenberg used his self-portrait to portray the mythic figure (figs. 4–5).¹⁴ This will emerge as a pattern of the artist in later works, as was the case with Gottlieb, as we will show.

These considerations aside, Hirszenberg’s painting may also be seen as offering a glimpse of a new era that the turn of the century was about to bring. An element of hope appears in the painting – in contrast to the bodies lying on the ground – in the form of a strong ray of light which falls upon the old man who is shown running towards it,

10 Hirszenberg appears to be mixing and confounding different styles to depict the dead bodies and elongated crosses, on the one hand, and the running, terrified old man, on the other. The naked bodies lying on the ground recall the *fin de siècle* preoccupation with sleep and mortality explored by such symbolist artists as Ferdinand Hodler (e.g., in his painting *La Nuit* [1890] in the Kunstmuseum in Berne), while the tall, narrow crosses point towards the elongated forms of art nouveau. In contrast, the image of the Wandering Jew is rendered realistically.

11 On Gottlieb’s classic work, see inter alia, Nehama Guralnik, *Bi-dmi yamav: Maurycy Gottlieb 1856–1879* (In the Flower of Youth: Maurycy Gottlieb, 1856–1879) [catalogue, Tel Aviv Museum] (Tel Aviv, 1991), 36–37 (Hebrew); Ezra Mendelsohn, *Painting a People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art* (Hanover, 2002), 110–12.

12 See Mirjam Rajner, “Chagall’s Jew in Bright Red,” *AJ* 4 (2008): 68–71.

Both Hirszenberg and Pasternak enrolled in the Munich Academy in the same year, 1883, and continued their studies for the following four years, probably taking some classes together and having some mutual contact. See the registration books of the Munich Art Academy at: <http://www.adbk.de/Historisches/matrikelbuecher/matrikelbuecher.php>

13 Unfortunately our attempts thus far to find the judges’ arguments for their decision have proven unsuccessful.

14 Israel Museum, B06.1424. The sculpture is listed in the Israel Museum catalogue as 1908, however we are following the date in Tamara Sztyma-Knasiecka, *Syn swojego Ludu: Twórczość Henryka Glicensteina 1870–1942* (The Son of his People: The Art of Henryk Glicenstein 1870–1942) (Warsaw, 2008), 84, fig. 12.



Fig. 4. Henryk Glicenstein, *The Portrait of Samuel Hirszenberg*, 1900, bronze, 36 × 39 × 25 cm, B06.1424, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.
Photo © The Israel Museum by Einat Arif-Galanti



Fig. 5. Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Wandering Jew*, 1899 (see fig. 1), detail



Fig. 6. Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, oil on canvas, 260 × 325 cm, Louvre, Paris

while a light in the sky, still hidden by the crosses, also conveys a ray of optimism. This light actually recalls Doré's final illustration, which includes rays of strong light in his depiction of the Last Judgment – the moment of the Wandering Jew's salvation (fig. 3d). Here the rays of light which shine from the heavens upon the cursed traveler symbolize his acceptance of Christianity, which enables him to finally sit down and rest. Although none of this transpires in Hirszenberg's work, it is certainly significant that he worked on and exhibited this large project during two major events in contemporary Jewish history – the Dreyfus affair and the emergence of the Zionist movement under Herzl's leadership. As Hirszenberg's painting became, as mentioned above, one of the early Zionist icons, disseminated to depict the fate of Jews in the Diaspora (dramatized by the bodies strewn on the ground and crosses signifying the turbulent historical past), the light may refer to the ray of the future, the Promised Land, to which the wandering figure may be headed. If seen in

such a heroic way, Hirszenberg's painting recalls Eugène Delacroix's famous *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), which Hirszenberg could have seen in the Louvre while he was studying in Paris (fig. 6). Thus, the figure of a woman carrying the flag and leading the way could have provided the Jewish artist with a symbol and source of inspiration of a figure – in this case the Wandering Jew – who leads the struggle for a cause. So too, the murdered figures in Delacroix's painting, particularly the one at the bottom left-hand corner of the painting, recall Hirszenberg's victims, especially the one lying beneath the Wandering Jew's legs.

And yet, Hirszenberg was first and foremost a Polish-Jewish artist, who was educated within the Polish orbit and spent most of his life in its sphere. And, much like his predecessor Maurycy Gottlieb, Hirszenberg also felt the need to enter into a dialogue with the history, culture, and art of his native country, and consciously or unconsciously integrated its elements into his art. And, as in the case



Fig. 7. Jan Matejko, *Wernyhora*, 1883–84, oil on canvas, 290 × 204 cm, MNK II-a-443. © From the collection of The National Museum in Cracow

of Gottlieb, the formidable figure of Jan Matejko, the leading Polish artist of the day, was his teacher at the Cracow School of Fine Arts (*Szkoła sztuk pięknych*), later the Academy of Fine Arts, which he attended between 1881–83. While director of the school, Matejko embarked on a painting that can further illuminate Hirszenberg's intentions in the *Wandering Jew*. In 1883–84 Matejko painted his monumental work *Wernyhora* (290 × 204 cm), returning to the theme that had already engaged him in 1875, and presented a legendary eighteenth-century prophet and bandura player who in 1771 had prophetically predicted the fall of Poland as well as its eventual rebirth and the joint alliance between Ukrainians and Poles (fig. 7).¹⁵ The myth and legend of Wernyhora had both Polish and Ukrainian traditions, though it was in the Polish literary versions that it had a certain impact on the historical process. In Polish tradition the myth and figure of Wernyhora came to represent the future union between Poles and Ukrainians against their common enemy, the Russians, and the breakdown of the class divisions in Poland that nullified the deep gaps that had existed between the nobles and the rest of society.¹⁶ Wernyhora's prophecies for a unified Poland became common in Polish culture in the nineteenth century, especially during the abortive Polish revolts of 1830 and 1863. In Matejko's painting, Wernyhora's possessed expression, distant gaze, and hand gestures – one hand protectively raised to his forehead, the other extending towards a distant future – show him at the moment of prophecy. Wernyhora's musical instrument lies at his feet, as he is surrounded by figures who eagerly want to hear his prediction. To his right a

scribe (seemingly a Polish noble Nikodem Suchodolski, a royal official from Korsun) scrupulously records his words, while he is propped up by a Ukrainian woman and a male Cossack. On one side of Wernyhora in the foreground is an Orthodox priest, and on the other side a child who holds tightly to the image of the Lady of Częstochowa.¹⁷ The diversity of the figures alludes to the unified alliance of Wernyhora's prophecy. Each of the figures encircling him reacts to the prophet's vision with a range of emotions – from fear and despair to thoughtfulness, melancholy, and innocence. The rising moon doubles as a halo, turning the bard into a saint and signifying the point of time when the day ends and the night begins, while approaching bats suggest a dark omen. By repeating Wernyhora's hand gesture, Hirszenberg appropriates some of the bard's prophetic qualities to his Christ-like Wandering Jew. Yet, in his painting the destruction is not only prophesied but painfully depicted; thus the light coming towards the old man causes him to raise both of his hands protectively – one shading his eyes, the other – in contrast to Wernyhora's gesture – trying with his raised palm to stop the ray.¹⁸ Both figures seem to be frightened by what the future entails, though the old man's facial expression in Hirszenberg's work projects a more deranged and fearful look than that of Wernyhora. Emerging alone from a valley of death, not encircled by fellow believers, Hirszenberg's character seems too distressed by what he has seen to assume a prophetic vision, and too overwhelmed by the destruction to face the hopeful rays of light.

This conversation between the two artists and their paintings may have actually been sparked by Hirszenberg's

15 Ewa Micke-Broniarek, *Matejce w hołdzie [...] W stulecie śmierci artysty, Katalog wystawy (Homage for Matejko [...] For the Hundredth Anniversary of the Artist's Death)* [Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie] (Warsaw, 1993), 41 (Polish).

16 Bandura is a plucked-string chordophone from the Ukraine that is considered its national musical instrument. On Wernyhora, see *Wielka encyklopedia powszechna, PWN* (The Great Encyclopedia of History, PWN [Polish Scientific Publishers]) (Warsaw, 1969), 12:188 (includes bibliography) (Polish); Michel Masłowski, "Le mythe de Wernyhora: Une prophétie polonaise sur la coexistence de l'Ukraine et de la Pologne," *Drouguïi mijdounarodnyï kongries ykraïnistiv* [Lviv, 22–28.8.1993] (Lviv, 1994), 146–54. Our sincere thanks to Professor Masłowski for making this article available to us.

17 John Molloy, "Millennialism: Maclise and Matejko," *Ireland's History Magazine, News* vol. 15, issue 6 (Nov./Dec. 2007): 1–3. According to Molloy, Wernyhora is "dressed like an Old Testament prophet, giving us the Jewish link." To this possible association we would add his first name Mojżesz.

18 Another historical painting that Hirszenberg may clearly have seen that places a Jew in its center with a visionary look and similar hand gestures was the work by the Warsaw artist Wojciech Gerson (1833–1901), entitled *Casimir the Great and the Jews* (1874). For an illustration, see Mendelsohn, *Painting a People*, 203, fig. 102. It should be pointed out that in Polish art and elsewhere the gesture of raising the hands does recur, yet the conventional form differs from the one in Matejko's painting.

painful memory of Matejko's inauguration speech at the beginning of the 1882 academic year at the Cracow School of Fine Arts. Despite the support Matejko offered talented individual Jewish students, notably Maurycy Gottlieb during the 1870s, Matejko's anti-Semitism emerged here in full force.¹⁹ His speech included a special reference to Jewish students, who by the early 1880s were a noticeable group within Cracow's School of Fine Arts:

and you, Hebrew students who come to our school, must bear in mind that art is not some kind of trade speculation or business – it is created to serve the sublime needs of the human spirit, in the atmosphere of love of God, intertwined with the love of one's country. If your motivation for studying at our academic art institution is only to use art for speculation's needs, without any sense of gratitude towards your country or a sense of civil duty; if you, Hebrews, having lived in our country for centuries do not feel the need to perform some more noble deeds for this land, and if you do not want to be Poles, well, then, get out of this country and go back to where there is no motherland at all, no sublime feelings of love for one's homeland, and no refined human virtues conceived by the love for one's country [...]²⁰

As Ezra Mendelsohn has pointed out, Matejko's speech deeply upset Jewish figures who found it hard to fathom how such a distinguished artist could air such thoughts. The Jewish press in Warsaw and St Petersburg reported elaborately on the event, yet Matejko did not relinquish his position, even when faced with a court case.²¹ A year after this speech, while Hirszenberg was still a student

in Cracow, Matejko started to work on his *Wernyhora*. Fifteen years later, and back in Łódź, while planning the subject and iconography for his *fin de siècle* masterpiece and struggling with his own predicament and that of the future of the Jews, Hirszenberg may have recalled the anti-Semitic sentiment that he felt in Cracow and Matejko's disturbing speech while reflecting on his teacher's *Wernyhora*.²² In responding to the prophetic figure, Hirszenberg stood firmly within the Polish cultural preoccupation with *Wernyhora*. He was not the only Polish artist to do so.

Stanisław Wyspiański (1869–1907), the distinguished Polish writer and artist who collaborated with his teacher, Jan Matejko, on the decoration of St Mary's church in Cracow (1889–91), also based himself upon the image of *Wernyhora* when he created the stained-glass decoration for Cracow's St Francis church. The project, executed between 1897 and 1902, included among other images the monumental *God the Father* (fig. 8). Depicted with a long wavy beard and raising his hand powerfully above his head, he recalls the gesture of Matejko's prophet and his visionary appearance. The waves at the bottom left of the image, the stars or planets above and mountains on the horizon, depicted in minimal fashion, along with an animal held under his arm, seem to show God at the moment of creation. Thus two of Matejko's students – a Polish Jew and a non-Jewish Pole – within several years utilized the same visual source created by their teacher to reinterpret it in diametrically opposed ways: while Hirszenberg focused on *Wernyhora*'s perturbing prophecy, exaggerating it even further, Wyspiański drew from this legendary image the power of the vision and belief in the (re)birth.²³

19 Mendelsohn, *Painting a People*, 201–7.

20 Originally published in Marian Gorzkowski, "Ze Szkoły Sztuk Pięknych" (In the School of Fine Arts), *Czas*, no. 240 (1882): 2–3 (Polish); reprinted with English translation in Natasza Styrna, "Jewish Artists in Kraków, 1873–1939," in *Jewish Artists in Kraków, 1873–1939* [catalogue, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa] (Cracow, 2008), 38–39. For a slightly different translation of the opening sentence, see Mendelsohn, *Painting a People*, 205; on Matejko's anti-Semitism, see Dariusz Konstantynów, "'Mistrz nasz Matejko' i antysemita" ["Matejko, Our Master" and Anti-Semites], *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 222 (2007): 164–98 (Polish).

21 Mendelsohn, *Painting a People*, 204–5.

22 Dinah Hirszenberg in her memoir of the artist notes that Hirszenberg was extremely disturbed by the anti-Semitic atmosphere he encountered in the Cracow School of Fine Arts. Her memoir (in French) of the artist bears the date May 1, 1909, presently in the Muzeum Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, Warsaw (hereafter, DH, *Memoir*). A small section of her memoir was published in German translation in *Judischer Almanach* 5670 (Vienna, 1910). Thanks to Ms Monika Czekanowska for bringing this publication to our attention.

23 Wyspiański wrote his best known play *Wesele* (The Wedding) in 1901 where he actually introduced the ghost of *Wernyhora* as one of the

Hirszenberg's and Wyspiański's images can be linked more directly if one juxtaposes the woman lying in a crucified position (with the bottom of the cross adjacent to her body) in the *Wandering Jew's* lower left corner with Wyspiański's allegory of *Polonia* shown as a dead woman (figs. 9–10). Wyspiański had created the ca. 3 m-high pastel between 1893 and 1894 as a preparation for a stained-glass window for Lwów's cathedral. He worked on it while living in Paris (1890–95) and studying at the Colarossi Academy, where Hirszenberg himself studied between ca. 1889–93, raising the possibility that the artists may have come into contact with each other there. The facial expression, hair, and extended limp arm in both images are similar, suggesting the possibility that Hirszenberg too – either inspired by Wyspiański or by an external source – was portraying here an allegory of a crucified and moribund Poland as a parallel to his male Jewish victim covered by a *tallit*. The presence of both defeated images – the Jewish and the Polish – would stress the correlation between the *Wandering Jew's* universal message of suffering and Hirszenberg's Polish roots more emphatically. Moreover, Wyspiański's images of falling, sleeping, or dead characters personifying “Falling Angels” and “Four Elements,” especially “Earth” and “Water,” created between 1895–97 as pastel sketches and preparations for the Franciscan church in Cracow, could have served as additional inspiration for the strewn figures in Hirszenberg's work.²⁴ However, the frightened look in his *Wandering Jew's* face was to be confirmed by the harrowing events that struck the Jews of Russia several years later, notably the infamous Kishinev pogrom in 1903.

Indeed, the first years of the twentieth century witnessed a dramatic development in the life of Jews in Eastern Europe. The vast migration of Jews to the west that began

play's characters. Wernyhora hopes to raise the revolt and reunite the Polish nation, only to be frustrated by the behavior of the guests (the Polish people); *Wesele: dramat w 3 aktach* (Wedding: Drama in 3 Acts) (Cracow, 1901) (Polish). On Wyspiański, see Barbara Piotrowska (ed.), *Stanisław Wyspiański – Opus Magnum* (Stanislaw Wyspiański – Magnum Opus) [catalogue, Museum Narodowe w Krakowie] (Cracow, 2000) (Polish); see also Masłowski, “Le mythe de Wernyhora.”

²⁴ For these images by Wyspiański, see http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Wysp_Witrazeh.htm.

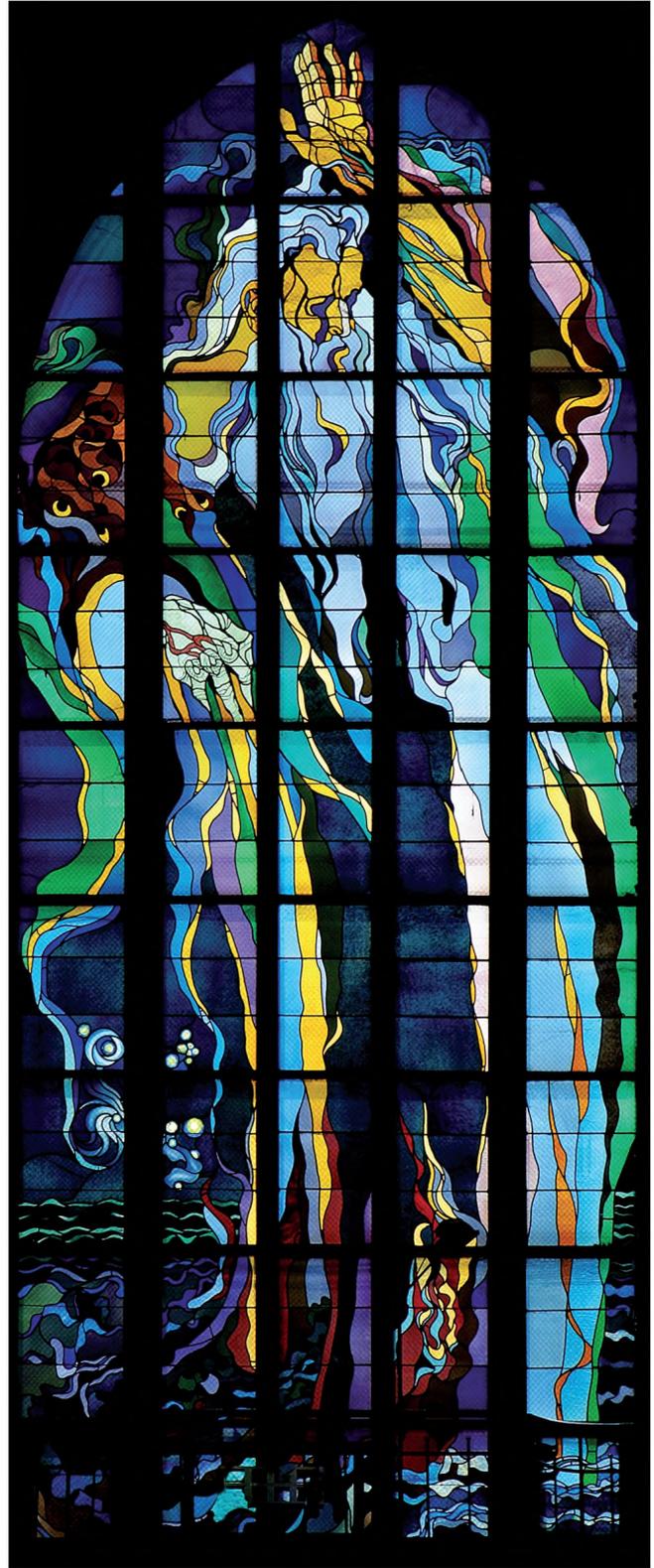


Fig. 8. Stanisław Wyspiański, *God the Father*, 1897–1902, realized 1905, stained glass window, The Basilica of Franciscans in Cracow. Photo © by Bogumił Krużel, The Archive of the Franciscan Monastery. Courtesy of Father Franciszek Solarz



Fig. 9. Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Wandering Jew*, 1899 (see fig. 1), detail

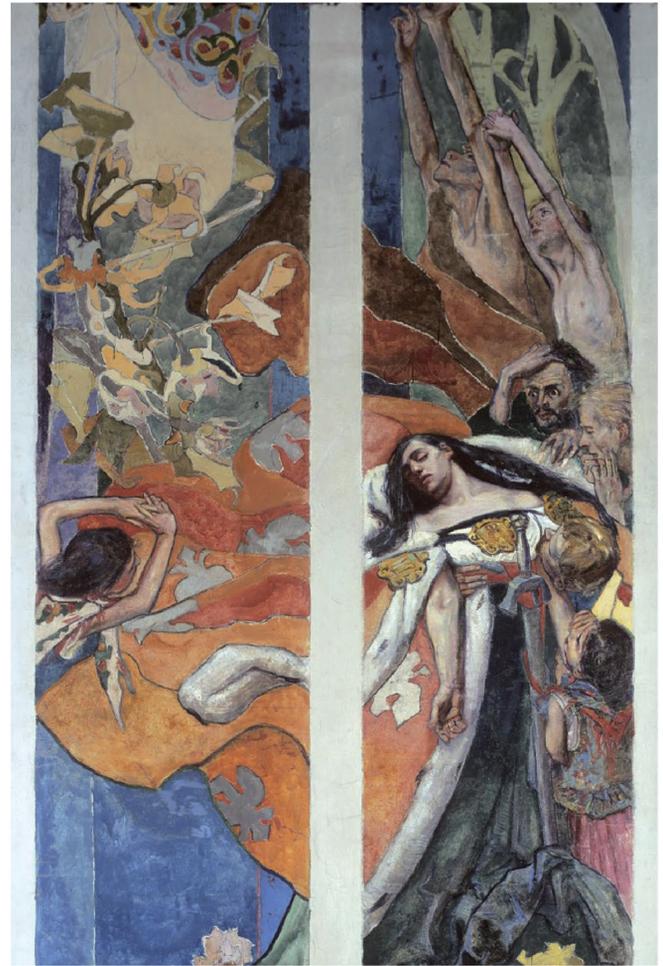


Fig. 10. Stanisław Wyspiański, *Polonia*, 1893–94, pastel, 298 × 153 cm, MNK II b-517. © From the collection of The National Museum in Cracow

in the early 1880s continued unabated through the first decade of the twentieth century, accentuated by economic uncertainty and stagnation, and the political unrest epitomized by the Revolution of 1905. Throughout this period Jewish youth became engaged in a wide variety of political and social movements, breaking with traditional notions of community and religion. Constant discussions and political manifestations among Jews dominated the urban horizon in Eastern Europe. Such was the case in Cracow as well, the city to which Hirszenberg moved in 1904. His return attracted attention among aspiring Jewish artists and critics, and it was in Cracow where Hirszenberg was to relate bleakly to the changing contours of Jewish life in two classic works: *Exile* or *Golus* (1904) – now lost – and *The Black Banner* (1905) – presently in The Jewish

Museum in New York. Hirszenberg's depiction of these historical developments can be seen as the dramatization of his *Wandering Jew's* pessimistic prophecy.²⁵ These paintings continue the theme of destruction and wandering in Hirszenberg's oeuvre, but instead of tackling the subject in a timeless and universal way they now focus directly on contemporary East European Jews in the process of migrating or burying their dead, weaving

²⁵ These paintings have been discussed by various authors. See inter alia, Norman Kleeblatt in Norman L. Kleeblatt and Vivian B. Mann, *Treasures of the Jewish Museum* (New York, 1986), 166–67; Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, 1998), 230–35; Gideon Ofrat, *Shivhei galut* (In Praise of Exile) (Jerusalem, 2000) (Hebrew); Jerzy Malinowski, *Malarsstwo i rzeźba Żydów Polskich w XIX i XX wieku* (Painting and Sculpture of Polish Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century) (Warsaw, 2000), 82–84 (Polish).

together the symbolic or mythical with a sense of the here and now. Hirszenberg's Wandering Jew from the 1899 painting, with his fearful eyes and bedazzled look, appears anew in *The Black Banner* (figs. 11–13), as he joins other shocked and astonished Orthodox Jews in a procession that accompanies the coffin in the painting. Staring towards the viewer in disbelief, the figure (again the image of the artist himself) establishes a direct link between the *Wandering Jew* and *The Black Banner*, highlighting Hirszenberg's merging the symbolic with the realistic.

The attempt to bring together mythic and real figures can also be seen when looking at Hirszenberg's *Exile*

(fig. 14) in tandem with Abel Pann's *Refugees* (1906) (fig. 15), a painting obviously inspired by the former. Hirszenberg's nomadic Jews still maintain a more symbolic quality to them. This is achieved by creating a greater distance between the migrants and the spectator, by leaving the snow-covered landscape desolate and empty, and by integrating into the canvas traditional Jewish figures – one holding a Torah scroll wrapped in a prayer shawl, a second trudging through the snow, deep in thought, aided by a cane and arousing allusions to the Wandering Jew. Yet Hirszenberg did not remain in the symbolic and mythic imagination; he included among

Fig. 11. Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Wandering Jew*, 1899 (see fig. 1), detail



Fig. 12. Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Black Banner*, 1905 (see fig. 13), detail



Fig. 13. Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Black Banner* (Czarny Sztandar), 1905, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 205.7 cm, Gift of the Estate of Rose Mintz, JM 63-67a. Photo by Richard Goodbody, Inc. Collection of The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, USA. Photo Credit: The Jewish Museum, NY / Art Resource, NY



Fig. 14. Samuel Hirszenberg, *Exile*, 1904, oil on canvas, whereabouts unknown



Fig. 15. Abel Pann, *Refugees*, 1906, oil on canvas, 97 x 160 cm, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo © The Israel Museum by Avshalom Avital



Fig. 16. (Left) Samuel Hirszenberg, *Exile*, 1904 (see fig. 14), detail

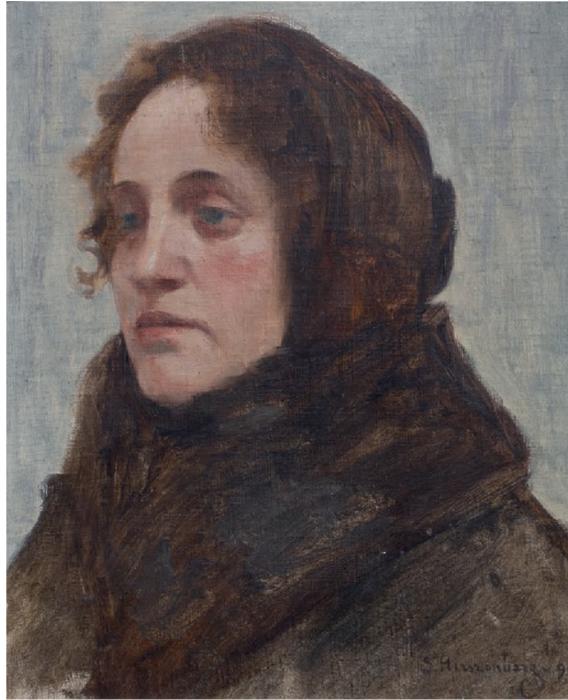


Fig. 17. (Right) Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Portrait of Dinah Hirszenberg*, 1903, oil on canvas, 38.5 × 32 cm, Gift of Mary Sonnenfeld, Tel Aviv, in memory of her late husband Otto Sonnenfeld. © Mishkan Le'Omanut, Museum of Art, Ein Harod

the itinerants a young man with round-rimmed glasses on the far right hand side of the painting, who attracts the viewer's attention. Clearly representing the more secular and politicized elements of Jewish society, he stands out in his "otherness" but also in his involvement with the more traditional elements of Jewish society in their wandering to an undetermined destination. Moreover, Hirszenberg again added a very personal form of identification by inserting his wife Dinah into the center of the migrants (figs. 16–17), giving expression to his, and especially her, attachment to the destiny and plight of contemporary East European Jews.²⁶

In 1907 Hirszenberg left Cracow to assume a teaching

position at the newly founded Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem. During his last years in Cracow he had played a leading role among a circle of young Jewish artists that formed around him. However, Hirszenberg's concerns were not theirs. The younger artists had greater interest in formal qualities in modern art rather than the depictions of the Jewish plight that distinguished Hirszenberg's work. His parents now dead, his life in Cracow burdened by disappointments and uncertainty, Hirszenberg had decided to accept Boris Schatz's invitation to join the teaching staff at Bezalel and leave Poland.²⁷

The last phase of Hirszenberg's artistic output, his year in Jerusalem, is usually described as a transformative

26 A portrait of Dinah Hirszenberg (1903), presently in the Ein Harod Art Museum, shows her with her head wrapped in a shawl exactly as she appears in *Exile*. It would appear that the portrait served as a preliminary study for her image in *Exile*, as a 1904 portrait of her (see *Ost und West* [1904]: 686) was not the one he utilized. A series of Hirszenberg's preliminary studies for the painting appeared in *Ost und West* (1904): 554–82, where she appears in a fragment of the procession on page 561. Dinah, who was a convert to Judaism, was deeply moved by the drama of Jewish history and may have been pleased to be so centrally

placed in the painting. Interestingly enough, here Hirszenberg followed Matejko's practice of inserting his wife into his paintings. See the vivid description of the painting by David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, 1984), 276–80.

27 Styrna, "Jewish Artists in Kraków," 41–45. Dinah Hirszenberg noted that "He left Europe without much regret [...]. Moreover, what could attach him to this lying Europe, where the voice was not sweet but left to the egoists, the indifferent, the charlatans." DH, *Memoir*, 34.



Fig. 18. Samuel Hirszenberg, *Near the Wailing Wall*, whereabouts unknown, reproduced in *Ost und West* 2 (1912): 131–2

one, and in some ways it was. The Mediterranean light, the depictions of Jerusalem's holy sites, its landscapes, and the encounter with the local population seemed to dominate the artist's interests; they pushed aside his previous preoccupations. He showed a keen interest in and portrayal of Jews of Middle Eastern origin (Yemenites and others) that was consistent with the "Oriental"

turn that was common among his colleagues in Bezalel (e.g., Ephraim Moses Lilien, Schatz himself, and Zeev Raban) even though their artistic styles were not similar. Hirszenberg tried to capture the inner feeling of the Yemenite Jews, showing them as melancholic and aged (fig. 18). He was clearly attracted to the wide range of Jews he confronted on the streets of Jerusalem. According to Dinah Hirszenberg, the artist was enthralled by the Old City of Jerusalem and walked through its alleys and narrow streets with a mixed feeling of joy and sadness, "no longer the European, who came there for curiosity, but the child of this ancient race."²⁸ He painted the Temple Mount from different vantage points, often without including human figures, and sketched various male figures, Jews and Arabs, indicating his engagement in both the holiness and worldliness of Jerusalem.²⁹

But, seeing Hirszenberg as an artist who had left his past completely behind him and was overpowered by the encounter with Jerusalem goes against the pattern of an individual's normative development as well as the evidence from the artist's own productivity. Hirszenberg arrived in Jerusalem with minimal means and was saddled with a troubling illness. He was clearly still deeply disturbed by the clash between modernity and traditional Jewish life that he had evoked in one of his last paintings in Cracow (*Spinoza*, 1907).³⁰ The extant oeuvre from his year in Jerusalem shows that Hirszenberg painted several works that related to his previous concerns, though in a new guise. One of them is an oil painting entitled *Moses*, showing the Hebrew leader in the desert dressed in oriental garb (including pointed slippers and an embroidered sash) while performing what seems to be one of his miracles (fig. 19).³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 35.

²⁹ See Erich Karl Borck, "Aus dem Nachlass von Samuel Hirszenberg," *Ost und West* 12 (1912): 129–36; further images, 137–42; Renata Piątkowska, "Pożegnanie z Golusem: Samuel Hirszenberg w Jerozolimie" (Farewell to Exile: Samuel Hirszenberg in Jerusalem), in *Jerozolimie w kulturze europejskiej* (Jerusalem in European Culture), eds. Piotra Paszkiewiczza and Tadeusza Zadroznego (Warsaw, 1997), 529–37 (Polish).

³⁰ This work was reprinted and discussed in Cohen, "Samuel Hirszenberg's Imagination," 246–48; see also DH, *Memoir*, 40.

³¹ The painting was exhibited in the large retrospective of Hirszenberg's paintings in Cracow in 1933. See *Wystawa Pamiątkowa Z Okazji 25-lecia*

Śmierci Błp. Samuela Hirszenberga [...] Abrahama Neumanna (Exhibition Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Death of Samuel Hirszenberg of Blessed Memory. [...] Abraham Neumann) (Cracow, [1933]) (Polish). Thanks to Ms Monika Czekanowska for bringing this publication to our attention. A black-and-white reproduction of the painting appeared in a Sotheby's auction catalogue in New York on 28 May 1986. See *Important Judaica* (New York, 1986), bid no. 363. According to the catalogue the painting was signed and dated *Jerusalem '08*; 50.9 × 66 cm. Unfortunately we have been unable as yet to see either the painting itself or a color reproduction. Our remarks thus need to be read with an extra measure of caution. We are grateful to



Fig. 19. Samuel Hirszenberg, *Moses*, 1908, oil on canvas, 50.9 × 66 cm, private collection

By painting the image of Moses, it seems that Hirszenberg was joining the Bezael trend of depicting biblical images, something that until that time he had refrained from doing. Turning towards the left, as did Matejko's *Wernyhora* and Hirszenberg's *Wandering Jew*, *Moses* continues, as they had, to communicate by gesturing with his hands. However, in contrast to the earlier paintings, here Moses' hands are outstretched in a very different position. Resembling the visionary-like figure of Mattathias the Maccabee, created by Boris Schatz in 1894 and well-known among

Ms Esta Kilstein of Sotheby's, Tel Aviv, for bringing the painting to our attention and to Mr William Gross of Tel Aviv for his most forthcoming assistance. The painting is presently in private hands.



Fig. 20. Boris Schatz, *Mattathias the Maccabee*, 1894, zinc cast, photograph (original lost)



Fig. 21. Samuel Hirszenberg and Boris Schatz with students in front of the Bezael Art School, 1908. photograph, Israel Museum Collection (in Nurit Shilo-Cohen [ed.], *Bezael shel Schatz, 1906–1929* [Jerusalem, 1983], 67, fig. 22)

Bezael pupils and teachers (fig. 20),³² Moses spreads out his hands to perform his miracle. Hirszenberg eliminated the sword Mattathias was holding and the trampled Greek body underneath the priestly figure, and neglected to show Moses, who was central to certain Zionist thinkers and artists, as a young and powerful Assyrian-looking lawgiver, as had Lilien.³³ Moses appears in Hirszenberg's painting as an elderly, wise prophet, whose hands (and not the staff) perform a miracle, as they do at various moments in the biblical narrative in the book of Exodus (10:21–22 and 14:26–27).

Arches emanate from the palms of Hirszenberg's Moses, creating a whirlwind that sets the entire landscape in motion, similar to the descriptions in Exodus. The

movement, enhanced by strong, visible brushstrokes, affects the sand, the stormy cloudy sky, and especially the procession of biblical Hebrews depicted on the horizon, wandering through the desert. This superhuman energy emanating from the tall and dominating figure of Moses recalls similar powers present in the image of *God the Father*, imagined, as we saw in the stained-glass window by Wyspiański, at the moment of Creation (fig. 8). However, when including the procession of wanderers into the painting, it seems that Hirszenberg was referring to two of his previous works, notably his *Exile* (1904) and *The Black Banner* (1905) (figs. 14, 13). Although seen in the background and in a sketchy manner, the procession in *Moses* is composed of people dressed in dark clothes,

32 Yigal Zalmona, *Boris Schatz, avi ha-ommanut ha-yisre'elit* (Boris Schatz, *The Father of Israeli Art*) [catalogue, Israel Museum] (Jerusalem, 2006), 21–24 (Hebrew). Schatz was extremely engaged with the figure of Moses and his iconography. During his stay in Paris he created several works based upon Moses' life, among them his *Moses on Mt Nebo* (1890), which he created as an oil painting and sculpture, portraying Moses, cane in hand, on the ridge of the mountain from which he tries to get a view of the Holy Land as promised in Deut. 34:1. (He later added this figure to a memorial plaque for Herzl in 1904, *ibid.*, p. 60.) An image of his sculpture *Mattathias the Maccabee* was reprinted in various journals, including *Ost und West* (1903): 293–94, that Hirszenberg surely knew, as his own work

was often illustrated in this journal. Though the sculpture seemingly never made it to Jerusalem, the image was popularly known, as can be seen in a Hanukkah lamp made in Bezael that has as its back wall the figure of Mattathias. See Shilo-Cohen (ed.), "Bezael" shel Schatz, 212. *Mattathias the Maccabee* was inspired by Schatz's teacher Mark Antokol'skii, whose sculpture of Jesus lifting his arms – one of them holding a cross – shows him performing a miracle at the shores of the Sea of Galilee. See Zalmona, *Boris Schatz*, 21–22, 24; *ills.* on pp. 26–27, 30.

33 For the image of Lilien's *Moses*, see Ferdinand Rahlwes (ed.), *Die Bücher der Bibel*, vol. 1 (Braunschweig, 1908); Shilo-Cohen (ed.), "Bezael" shel Schatz, 194.



Fig. 22. Samuel Hirszenberg, *Untitled (Pilgrims?)*, oil on canvas, 36 × 80 cm, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, B05.081 I. Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem by Elie Posner

bent over and shown thrusting forwards, towards the left side of the canvas, repeating the direction of the exiled and bereaved from the previous works. Similarly, the threatening clouds from *The Black Banner* reappear in *Moses*. It is thus not surprising that Schatz, upon creating a plaster relief as a memorial plaque for Hirszenberg six years after his death, showed in the background of the artist's portrait a procession based upon *Exile*, establishing a clear identification between Hirszenberg and the theme of Jewish wandering.³⁴

That identification between the artist and his subject seems to assume an added dimension in *Moses*. The image of an elderly, determined Moses, with a high forehead and beard, intimates again a physical likeness to Hirszenberg himself (fig. 21),³⁵ creating a parallel between the creative ability of Moses to effect change and turbulence through the power of his hands and the way in which Hirszenberg the artist used his hands to create works of art that could have an impact.³⁶ Yet, the marks on Moses' palms, from which the wondrous arches spring forth, bear an element of mutilation, recalling Christ's stigmata – of which the image best known to Hirszenberg was certainly Maurycy Gottlieb's *Christ Preaching at Capernaum* of 1878–79.³⁷ The inclusion of symbols that are universally associated

with Christ's suffering and martyrdom seems to point towards Hirszenberg's self-image and stress a similar, tragic aspect of the destiny of Moses and Hirszenberg, marked by self-sacrifice. Moses in Hirszenberg's painting remains at a distance, even removed from the people he has led and helped to cross the desert and symbolically to leave the *Galut*. Like Moses, Hirszenberg "brought" his haunted, wandering, and exiled Jews to the Promised Land, but again like Moses, he did not himself manage to witness their rebirth (in his art); neither, in the short time that was left to him, did he manage to experience it fully himself.

The only painting known at the moment that seems to interpret the processions of Jewish wanderers in a more optimistic light is a small (36 × 80 cm), unfinished and

34 The plaque was reproduced in Alec Mishory, *Shuru habitu u-r'u: ikonot u-smalim hazutiyyim zioniyim ba-tarbut ha-yisre'elit* (Lo and Behold: Zionist Icons and Visual Symbols in Israeli Culture) (Tel Aviv, 2000), 57 (Hebrew). Schatz's text, appended to the visual image, presents Hirszenberg's migration to Palestine as a form of regeneration from the travails of *Galut*.

35 Hirszenberg is seated in the second row, second from the left.

36 In Schatz's citation on the above memorial plaque he noted that Hirszenberg came with the desire and goal to create "Hebrew art."

37 See Guralnik, *Bi-dmi yamav* (n. 11, above), 173, cat. no. 52.

untitled oil on canvas created in 1908, presently in the Israel Museum (fig. 22).³⁸ It shows a group of Jews in a procession, all dressed in “oriental” fashion, several of whom gesticulate as if partaking in a certain dance. This procession also raises associations with his *Exile* (fig. 14) in its direction and the diversity of its figures, though it transmits a very different ambience – the harsh elements of *Exile* giving themselves over to proud, tall figures that bear a serious countenance. One interpreter of Hirszenberg’s work has mentioned that he created a painting, *Pilgrims*, in which Jews are seen happily ascending to Jerusalem to celebrate the holidays. This small painting, in which the characters are viewed from below rising up against the horizon, may be the one referred to, showing how the procession of *Exile* became refashioned as a pilgrimage.³⁹ Here too, Hirszenberg has hinted at a personal connection, in the guise of the figure standing at the right end of the picture. Although unfinished and rendered only in pencil, this male character stands out among the group, as his European clothing (hat and coat) intimate that he has yet to adapt to the new environment. He turns away from the viewer and thus invites us to look with him (and “through his eyes”) at the group of “oriental”-looking dancing Jews. Due to his position and role in the painting, he recalls the image of the “other” that we alluded to in *Exile* – the young man on the far right side of the painting. It is not stretching the imagination too far to identify these different figures as images of Hirszenberg himself: while in *Exile* he stands out among the traditional Jewish community by his modern appearance and gaze, his non-belonging is again stressed here by the fact that he remains a foreign-looking bystander.⁴⁰ What is even more significant and indicative of Hirszenberg’s inability (or unwillingness) to embrace the new Zionist ideology and show it in his art, is the fact that he does not have the “oriental” Jews facing East (i.e., towards the right side of the painting), as was commonly

done in Zionist-inspired images, most notably in Lilien’s classic depictions. The figures in Hirszenberg’s painting are shown moving across the canvas in the same westward orientation as are those in *Exile*.⁴¹ These two symbolic works, *Moses* and the unfinished *Pilgrims* (?), thus clearly stray from Hirszenberg’s depiction of sites and people in contemporary Jerusalem and thus hint at a spiritual quest of the artist during this year, a quest that connected him to previous works which he refashioned in a new context.

Such appears to be the case with *On the Way to the Western Wall* (fig. 2), which may also be seen as one of these last reflective works of the artist. The small painting depicts, as mentioned above, a group of Orthodox Jews wearing colorful long robes and fur head coverings, walking away from the viewer through a narrow path, between large boulders of different shapes and sizes on each side, towards the Western Wall. The boulders tower above the Jews in the procession. In the early twentieth century, the only way to reach the Wall was through the very constricted alleys of the Maghribi quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, whose houses reached very close to the Wall (fig. 23). A narrow path of about 3.6 m separated the back of the houses from the Wall. Walking through the quarter to the Wall one could not necessarily see it, as it appears in Hirszenberg’s painting. Hirszenberg’s perspective was thus a mix of realism and fantasy.

Interestingly enough no other known work of Hirszenberg’s presents a full view of the Wall; in the depiction of the three elderly Middle-Eastern Jews (fig. 18), they are seen sitting, somewhat downcast, leaning on the Wall or on the back of one of the homes in the Maghribi quarter. Why Hirszenberg refrained from portraying the Wall when it was such a major attraction for artists and photographers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a significant issue, especially when artists such as the German orientalist Gustav Bauernfeind, who lived

38 IM no. 501/17.

39 Zvi Sharfshtein, *Shmu'el Hirszenberg: sippur toldotav vi-zirato* (Shmuel Hirszenberg: His Life and Work) (New York, [192–]), 16 (Hebrew).

40 This figure recalls a self-portrait of Hirszenberg, wearing a similar hat, and his wife that appeared in various places. See cover of Isaac (Yitshok) Lichtenstein (Likhtenshteyn), *Shmuel Hirschenberg* (Paris, 1928[?]) (Yiddish).

41 Rajner, “Chagall’s Jew”: 72–76. Cf. the two most popular images by Lilien in Zionist circles that have been reproduced many times: the postcard for the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 (Ephraim M. Lilien, *Sein Werk, mit einer Einleitung von Stefan Zweig* [Berlin and Leipzig, 1903]), n.p.; “The Jewish May,” in Morris Rosenfeld, *Lieder des Ghetto*, trans. Berthold Feiwel, with illustrations by E.M. Lilien (Berlin [1902]). Both of these works served other artists in the twentieth century.

in Jerusalem, realistically portrayed it, as in his *The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem* (1890, fig. 24) and gave it prominence, as did Lilien.⁴² The fragmented view of the Western Wall in Hirszenberg's work avoids turning it into the kind of tourist site popular in nineteenth-century images, but rather enunciates its symbolic interrelationship with the oncoming worshippers, whose road to it appears to be blocked by the boulders. Herein may lie the implications of this work in terms of the artist's world view.

The homogenous group of elderly Jewish men (neither children – the symbol of the future – nor women appear) in Hirszenberg's painting move in dimness, in a silent procession between the tall stones that throw a dark shadow over the Western Wall. Hirszenberg does not show the Jews in prayer (as did so many other artists and photographers who depicted the Wall) but rather on their way towards the Wall as if it were their remaining hope; yet the path to the Wall is blocked. The shape and density of the boulders that enclose them recall the houses of the Old City's Maghribi quarter, but they also conjure up the memory of east European Jewish graveyards where closely placed tall tombstones could arouse a similar sensation (fig. 25). Such an association brings to mind Hirszenberg's earlier painting *The Jewish Cemetery*, created in 1892 (fig. 26), in which he reacted to the difficult situation of Jews following the pogroms in Russia in the early 1880s.⁴³ Although the movement in this painting is shown sideways (and not as in the 1908 work), the foreground and the scattered tombstones lie in a shadow, while the wall surrounding the cemetery, and especially the impressionistically rendered sky with its pink clouds, are lit, resembling the division of light in the later painting. Even the trees in the background create a composition that is later repeated when he inserted the cypress trees above

the Western Wall in 1908.⁴⁴ In connecting the earlier Polish work to its Jerusalem sequel, a broader, historical dimension to the latter one is added. Thus, the contrast of light between the tombstones and the grey shadow on the light-colored Wall seems to allude to the interplay between the troubled moments of past Jewish history, through which the worshippers pass, and the future ahead of them, that is bright (as the colors on the Wall and the blue sky), but remains impossible for them to reach.

Thus, if *On the Way to the Western Wall* (fig. 2) is now juxtaposed with Hirszenberg's *Wandering Jew* (fig. 1), as suggested at the beginning of this article, it is possible to better understand the dialogue between them. While the troubled Christ-like Wandering Jew runs towards the shiny light through the density of crosses and over scattered corpses symbolizing the harshness of European (Jewish and Polish) history, the colorful procession of Orthodox Jews walks between the tombstone-like boulders towards the bright Western Wall. The cross as the symbol of Christianity is now replaced by the Wall as the symbol of Judaism and the sole and frightened figure of the Wandering Jew is replaced by a group of co-religionists solemnly walking towards their place of worship. Moreover, while the Hirszenberg-like Wandering Jew is running towards us, instantly engaging our emotions with his plight, the Jewish worshippers are shown from their back, moving away from us but also making us – and the artist – part of their procession. And yet, as argued, the shadows of the past – of the victims and their tombstones – are deep, and the way towards the Wall, the light – and Redemption – obstructed.

Hirszenberg's move to Jerusalem signified in some ways a new beginning, yet as shown by the works created during the eleven months he lived there – notably *Moses*,

42 Lilien executed several images of the Western Wall in different media. See inter alia, *The Wall of Lamentation in Jerusalem* (1908), in E.M. Lilien in the Middle East: *Etchings (1925–1908)* [catalogue, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Avraham Baron Art Gallery] (Beer Sheva, 1988), n.p.; E.M. Lilien: *Aus dem graphischen Werk* [catalogue, Galerie Michael Hasenclever] (Munich, 1996), no. 19 (1913); other images appear in *Le-zayyer be-or: ha-hebbet ha-zillumi bi-zinat E.M. Lilien* (Painting with Light: The Photographic Aspect in the Work of E.M. Lilien) [catalogue, Tel Aviv Museum of Art] (Tel Aviv, 1991), 130–31, 197 (Hebrew).

43 See Susan Tumarkin Goodman (ed.), *The Emergence of Jewish Artists in Nineteenth-Century Europe* [catalogue, The Jewish Museum] (New York, 2001), 78.

44 The appearance of cypress trees above the Wall was a common motif in popular images from the nineteenth century. See *Ommanut ve-ummanut be-Eretz Yisrael ba-me'ah ha-t'sha esreh* (Art and Craftsmanship in Eretz Israel in the Nineteenth Century) [catalogue, The Israel Museum] (Jerusalem, 1979) (Hebrew).



Samuel Hirszenberg, *Jerusalem (On the Way to the Western Wall)*, 1908 (see fig. 2)

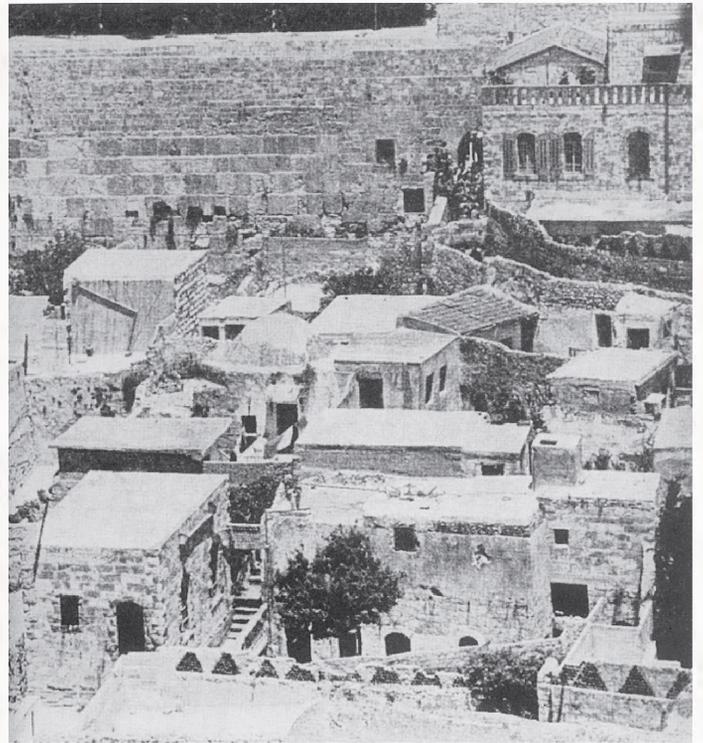


Fig. 23. Maghribi Quarter, Old City, Jerusalem (1930s), photograph, view from the west



Fig. 25. Tombstones in Jewish cemetery, Ternopol, Western Ukraine (photograph in D. Goberman, *Jewish Tombstones in Ukraine and Moldova* [Moscow, 1993], fig. 179)



Fig. 24. Gustav Bauernfeind, *The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem*, ca. 1890, oil on canvas, 52 x 100 cm, private collection



Fig. 26. Samuel Hirszenberg, *The Jewish Cemetery*, 1892, oil on canvas, 200 x 297 cm. Photo © Mario Goldman, courtesy of Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Pilgrims (?), and especially *On the Way to the Western Wall* – he did not entirely leave behind the Jewish world he had known in Europe. Although he taught briefly at Bezalel, his art – contrary to Schatz’s later statement⁴⁵ – did not join the celebration of creating a new, Hebrew art. His art, like his real and imaginary self-portraits, remained aware

of complex, often opposing worlds and identities that characterized Jewish life at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. He managed to transfer this awareness to some of the works he created in Jerusalem, *almost* bringing his wandering and search to a conclusion.



⁴⁵ See above, nn. 34 and 36.